

Boys fall like dominoes by honeyvenom

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Summary:

Eddie and Richie have been dating for two months when Stan starts to notice. It's little things at first: the curve of Eddie's ankle when he sits in the hammock or the fan of his eyelashes against his cheek. He thinks he's doing a pretty good job of ignoring it, of not thinking or saying the word *crush*, until Richie approaches him with an offer.

Boys fall like dominoes

Author's Note:

This fic features an intense, emotionally charged teenage relationship between Eddie and Richie, where jealousy and territorial behaviour come into play. Please don't read if that makes you uncomfortable.

Eddie and Richie have been dating for two months when Stan's eyes start to linger. It creeps up on him slowly, like the crest of a wave. He'll look at Eddie and his eyes will stick for a second too long. It's just little things at first: the curve of his ankle where he sits with one leg hanging out of the hammock, or the dark fan of his eyelashes when he's looking down at a book. But then, maybe, he starts to look a bit more, keeping Eddie in his periphery when they have class together, or flicking his gaze back and forth when Eddie sits across from him at lunch.

These quiet moments don't happen too often though, because suddenly Richie will be there, sucking up all the oxygen in the room. And when Richie's around, he's all that Eddie can focus on. He's the loud-mouthed, quick-talking centre of the universe.

It doesn't help that they're constantly touching. Not that it's really any surprise; they were always touching as kids. But where that meant a quick scuffle over who got to sit in the hammock or Richie attacking Eddie with tickles until he screeched with laughter, now it's constant kissing and hand-holding. It's Eddie sitting on Richie's lap every time they hang out at the clubhouse – Richie's hand sneaking up Eddie's t-shirt when the others aren't looking – and lazily making out in the corner of Bill's basement when they're all watching a movie and throwing popcorn around.

But it's fine. Eddie and Richie are just as annoying as they've always been. And it's not like Stan's hurting anyone if sometimes he looks at Eddie a little too much. It's not like it means anything.

He repeats this to himself on the way home from school one day,

after an entire lunch break watching Eddie's throat move as he tipped his head back and drank from a bottle of water. *It doesn't mean anything, it doesn't mean anything*, even as Eddie's smile and dark hair flicker like a candle in the back of his head. It's okay, he can deal. And he does, more or less, until things all come crashing down one summer afternoon.

It's a quiet, Loserless day; one of those rare times when everyone is too busy to meet. But Stan is happy enough. He spends the day traipsing around the woods documenting a family of swallows and making notes in a small travel journal. It's a balmy evening, and he takes the long way back to town, winding through the fields and past the abandoned cowshed.

And that's when he sees them: Eddie pressed up to the side of the barn, Richie pinning his wrists to the wall as he kisses him. Stan freezes, not really sure what he's seeing, but feeling lost in the flutter of Eddie's fingers. A voice somewhere deep in Stan says he shouldn't be watching this, but it's drowned out by the roar in his head. Because Eddie's cheeks are flushed, and he's making these hurt little noises into Richie's mouth. And suddenly Richie is breaking the kiss to dip his head and lap at the hollow of Eddie's throat, where his collarbone glistens with sweat. And the noise that Eddie makes, a growling little moan, burns a hole inside Stan's brain. He doesn't think he'll ever forget the way Eddie arches his back as Richie pins his hands, or the expression Richie makes when his upper lip curls up and he bites into the flesh of Eddie's shoulder like a soft apple.

As Stan watches the blood rise to the surface of Eddie's skin, his mouth floods with want. The intensity makes him stumble backwards, and a twig snaps loudly in the arid emptiness of the field. Just before the boys turn, ears pricking from the sound, Stan breaks away, falling and running back to town as fast as his legs can go until his lungs are burning and the cowshed is a pinprick in the distance.

Something changes after that. A rip in the cloth that Stan had erected between him and Eddie. Suddenly just looking at him isn't enough, now he finds himself thinking about him too. His mind wanders to Eddie when he's at church or back at the house doing his homework, pencil skittering sideways across the page as he thinks about Eddie's small body pressed against the cowshed, the fierce o of his mouth

when Richie got his skin between his teeth. And it isn't the way Stan has ever thought about girls. He'd dated a pretty girl in his math class called Penelope Splitz for five months until her family had moved to Oklahoma, and all he'd ever wanted was to hold her hand. Nothing like this.

And why does it have to be Eddie of all people? he thinks to himself moodily as he cycles to school. He's extremely opinionated and annoyingly delicate, always complaining of chest pains and his lack of white blood cells whenever they hung out. But even Stan could admit that somehow Eddie was different when Richie wasn't around. Softer somehow. And he could be nice. He didn't make Stan feel like a complete dweeb when he described bird watching or talked about decathlon, unlike Richie's habit of yelling *NERD ALERT* every time he even mentions an equation.

That's how Richie walks into the clubhouse one day to find Stan and Eddie sitting together on the hammock. They're huddled close, knees almost touching, and Stan's showing Eddie a bird that he likes in a book he got from the library. He's close enough that he can count all the freckles on Eddie's nose, and he's been valiantly trying to stop his finger from trembling as he traces the outline of a bird on the page.

"Hey Richie," Eddie says, throwing his boyfriend a small smile before looking back to Stan. "That's so cool though. So you're saying its wings completely change colour when it's trying to attract a mate?"

"It doesn't change colour exactly, it's more it changes to reflect its environment."

Richie, who had been watching them quietly, suddenly rips the book from Stan's hands.

"What's this then?" Richie says, looking at the book upside down.

Eddie stares at him crossly. "Hey, stop being so rough, Richie. Stan got that book from the library."

"It's a book about the indigenous birds of North America," Stan says, not liking the careless way Richie's letting the book hang open or the growing smirk on his face as he looks back down at Stan.

"I bet knowing everything about pigeons gets you all the pussy, huh Stan?"

Stan feels his entire face burn an ugly shade of red. Before he can respond, Richie's dumped the book back in his lap, knocking the air out of him as the spine hits him in the stomach.

"Don't be a dick, Richie," Eddie says sternly.

"Sorry, baby," Richie says, voice laced with mock contrition as he leans down to tuck his hands under Eddie's armpits. "I just gotta borrow my boy for a minute," he says to Stan before hauling Eddie off the hammock for a kiss.

"Richie, what the fuck? You can't pull me around like that," Eddie grouches when their lips part, but his face is flushed and he's already stretching up on his tiptoes for another kiss before he's even finished the sentence.

Stan packs up his things and leaves quickly, trying to ignore the gasped *Richie* Eddie makes when Richie lays him down on the hammock. Doesn't want to think about how pink Eddie's cheeks will be, or if Richie will sink between his legs and hold him there until he's decided he's done.

Things get even worse the day Eddie rests a hand on his forearm.

"And you should have seen Stan," Eddie says to the Losers, reaching out to touch Stan's arm, filling his brain with white noise. "He was amazing, he worked out this crazy-hard equation in algebra in three seconds." Richie, smoking a cigarette across the table, doesn't say anything, lets the smoke trail slowly from his mouth as he looks at Stan under his dark fringe of hair.

Stan goes home that evening feeling like he's been burnt. Later in bed he looks at the place Eddie had put his hand, his skin warm and sun-kissed, and he aches all over. Sliding his hand into his underwear, he replays that scene at the cowshed from weeks before, remembering the way Richie had pinned Eddie's hands, the savagery of their kiss. He wonders if they've done anything more than kiss yet, he wonders if they've – and he moans as he thinks it – *fucked* yet. As he reaches

his peak, he bites down on his pillow, pretends it's Eddie as he replaces Richie's mouth with his own.

In a cruel twist of fate, Eddie and Stan then get paired up in biology for a homework assignment. Eddie's sitting near the front of class, and when their names are called, Eddie turns to smile at him. Stan smiles back, or gives something that feels like an approximation of a smile. He's not sure because he's too busy wondering if Eddie's shoulder still carries Richie's bite, how sore it was when Richie released his skin from his teeth.

He almost falls over after class when he finds Eddie waiting for him by his locker, clutching a pile of books to his chest.

"Hey," he says, "do you want to come over tonight?"

Stan feels his mouth go desert dry. "Come over?"

"Yeah, you know, for our assignment?"

"Oh! Yeah, of course. That sounds great. Erm, but won't you be with Richie?"

Eddie tucks a loose curl of hair behind his ear, smiles.

"Richie's with Beverly tonight. They're going to Bangor to see some rock band."

And that's how Stan ends up at Eddie's house after school. And not just in Eddie's house, but in his bedroom, surrounded by his books and toys. They sit on the floor cross-legged looking down at their textbooks, Eddie munching happily on a slice of freshly baked lekach that Stan had brought from home. Stan's trying to concentrate but his eyes keep blinking across Eddie's legs, because all he's wearing is a pair of soft cotton shorts and a t-shirt. Richie loves Eddie's legs, always has a big hand cupped around his thigh, or stroking down his calf until Eddie's arching his back like a cat and telling him to quit it. Stan would usually roll his eyes and leave the room, but now he thinks he might get it. Thinks what it would be like to reach out and trace a finger along his ankle bone. He's so engrossed, he jumps when they hear a tapping at the window.

"Shit, it's Richie," Eddie says, biting his lip. "Just a sec, I'll get rid of him."

As soon as Eddie's unlocked the window, Richie's crop of dark hair and shoulders are pushing inside like a chaotic, leather-clad Peter Pan.

"My favourite baby bow spaghetti," he crows, a dopey grin on his face.

"What are you doing here? I thought you were with Bev tonight."

"The band sucked so we hitched a ride and came back early. Thought I could sleep over." His mouth swallows whatever Eddie was going to say, making Eddie stumble back from the force of it. But then his eyes are sliding over Eddie's shoulder and he goes rock still when he sees Stan. In a single beat he looks at Stan sitting on the carpet, the cake tin of lekach, and the soft shorts Eddie's wearing.

"What's this cosy little scene?"

Eddie wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. "Richie, I told you I was studying with Stan tonight," he says, voice shaky from the kiss.

"Yeah, I thought you meant studying in the library. Not in your bedroom."

"I can go, I don't mind," Stan says. And maybe he should. Because when Richie goes quiet it means trouble is brewing, like the silence before a storm. And he's looking at Stan with a weird expression. Like he's seeing and realising something for the first time.

"Don't be stupid," Eddie says over his shoulder. "Richie, I'll see you tomorrow."

"What? You want *me* to go?"

"Stanley and I need to work. Come on, shoo," and he's pushing at Richie until he gets the hint and slips out.

"Sorry about that," Eddie says, coming back to sit with Stan. "He's a bit of a pushy jerk sometimes."

Stan swallows, thinks of the way Richie had climbed up to Eddie's window. "He sleeps over every night?" he asks before he can help himself.

A blot of high, pink colour stains Eddie's cheeks like crushed candy. "Erm, most nights, yeah." He starts picking at a loose thread on his shorts. "My mom would kill him if she knew he was coming over, she *hates* Richie, so he sneaks in when she's watching TV. She always has the sound turned up so she doesn't hear him. Though once he almost fell off the roof and crushed the gardenias," he giggles.

Stan smiles too, his eyes sneaking to Eddie's bed. If Richie sleeps round, that means they must have done more than just kissing. He sees a flash of Richie pressing Eddie against his pillows, rutting up against him, and he looks away, ears burning.

Stan tries not to notice how Eddie comes to school a couple of days later with a hickey the size of a golf ball on his lower neck. It's violently purple, smudged against his olive skin like a fresh ink stain. He tries to hide it, but Stan gets a peek of it when his t-shirt gapes open as he leans down to zip up his bag. Stan grows dizzy with want and he stumbles out of the cafeteria, followed by the Losers' worried yells and Richie's dark gaze. He spends the next 20 minutes in the boys' bathroom, trying not to be sick as he sweats through his shirt and shoves a desperate hand down his jeans. He thinks about Eddie's legs, imagines him trembling as Richie marks him up, and chokes against the hand he presses to his mouth.

Things change after that. Every time Stan gets anywhere near Eddie, Richie is there too. They'll be talking at the clubhouse and Richie will suddenly be there, using his fingers to grab Eddie's chin and force his head around to kiss him. He'll use tongue too, snaking it into Eddie's mouth as Stan's forced to stand there and watch them. Or when Stan asks Eddie if he wants to study together again after school, Richie will be pushing into their space, one long arm slung over Eddie's shoulders, saying, "Can't, my man. I've got Eddie tonight."

And then Richie starts to notice Stan's wandering eyes.

It first happens when they're by the lake one Saturday, all chatting and sharing snacks as Eddie and Richie kiss on a picnic blanket. The

others hoot loudly and throw sweets at them, but Stan just stares blankly, his ice cream cone melting sticky down his wrist. And then Richie's eyes are open and he's looking back at Stan. But he doesn't look surprised, doesn't break the kiss. He looks like he knew exactly what Stan was doing. Stan turns away so quickly he feels a twinge in his neck for two days afterwards. Every time Stan looks at Eddie after that, Richie will be looking at Stan. Every time he trails his eyes over Eddie's hands or his neck, he'll look sideways and see Richie watching him, something shifting behind his eyes.

A week after the lake, the Losers are leaving the clubhouse to go into town for milkshakes when Richie catches him on his way out.

"Hey Stan, stay behind for a sec."

Stan freezes, his back as straight as a ruler.

"Richie? Come on, I want strawberry," Eddie says from the doorway, pulling the strap of his backpack over one small shoulder.

"Go ahead, babe, I'll catch up."

Eddie hesitates, looks tentatively between the two boys for a second before running after the others.

Stan schools his face into nonchalance as he turns to face Richie.
"What's up?"

"You've been staring at Eddie."

Stan feels his insides turn to ice. "What? No I haven't."

"Yeah, you have. I've seen you."

Richie grins at him. It's wide and good-natured. But Stan knows that smile from years of being friends with Richie. It's a smile laced with mischief. Eddie had been cast as Puck in the school rendition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* last year, a perfect role for the boy's pixie face and small stature, but Stan always thought Richie secretly fit this role more. He was always pulling pranks, looking for people's weak spots.

"I don't know what you mean," Stan says.

"I don't know what you mean," Richie mimics in a high, breathy voice that sounds nothing like Stan.

Stan rolls his eyes. "Stop being an asshole. I'm not looking at Eddie. Unless you count the times when I talk to him. Then yeah, people do tend to look at each other, Richie. It's this little thing called common courtesy."

"Nah, that's not how you look at him. It's not how Bill looks at him, or Mike or Ben."

"This conversation is fucking stupid. I'm out of here, weirdo."

As soon as he's turned his back, Richie quickly pulls him by the backpack. Gets between him and the door as he stumbles backwards.

"Dude, wait. You haven't even heard me out."

"What, you're going to threaten to beat me up or something? If this is about me spending time with Eddie, then just say it."

Richie huffs, that infuriating smile just getting wider. "Stop being an idiot. I get how you look at Eddie because that's how I used to look at him. He's a gorgeous little stick of dynamite, I get it."

Stan shifts, doesn't say anything. This is leading somewhere and it won't end until Richie gets it out of his system.

"But I was thinking about how I'd feel if Eddie got swept off his feet by someone else. If some prick at school decided he wanted him and I never got a chance to know how sweet he was, how he tasted. How much that would suck."

Stan blushes. Because he knows how Eddie looks when he's being kissed. The way his eyes go hazy, how slick his lips get with Richie's spit.

"And that means that I understand," Richie pings the strap of Stan's backpack against his shoulder, "and I want to help you out."

"Help me out?" Stan asks, forehead creasing. Richie was so weird sometimes.

"I'm saying I'm gonna let you kiss him."

Stan's head fills with static. He's pretty sure Richie just said something about kissing Eddie but that couldn't be right.

"What?"

"Just one kiss, though. And I have to be there."

"Richie, what the fuck are you talking about? You want me to kiss your boyfriend?"

Richie looks at him like he's the one not making any sense.

"Dude, I'm not doing this because I want you to kiss him. I'm doing this because *you* want to kiss him."

"Stop fucking saying that! I don't want to kiss him!"

Richie stares at him for a second and then shrugs. "Sure, okay," he says lightly.

"Okay?"

"Yeah, totally. I guess I misunderstood. Sorry, man."

Stan leaves the clubhouse rattled, but feels slightly better when he catches up with the others. By the time Richie arrives, it's like nothing happened. He slides into the booth beside Eddie smelling like cigarettes and Eddie's eyes flutter as Richie gets a hand on the back of his neck and squeezes. Richie doesn't look or say anything weird for the rest of the evening, and Stan eventually lets himself relax. Especially when Richie sneaks a bottle of peach schnapps out of his bag and slips it into their drinks, making them all laugh. Stan thinks maybe it's the last he'll hear of it.

A couple of weeks later, Richie calls the house and invites him to the clubhouse to hang out with a breezy *yo dude, come and hang with us*. Stan agrees, stamping down on the voice in his gut that asks why

Richie had called. Richie never called. Bill always did, sometimes Mike. Never Richie. He ignores it, bored at home, and makes his way to the clubhouse. Except when he arrives, the only ones there are Richie and Eddie.

"Hey man," Richie greets loudly, stroking his hand through Eddie's hair as the other boy leans against him. Eddie's wearing denim shorts today and Stan wants to look at him so badly he feels sick from it. But he keeps his eyes fixed on Richie.

Stan pauses at the entrance to the clubhouse, feeling antsy. "Where's everyone else?"

"They're not coming."

Stan sneaks a glance at Eddie, but he seems just as confused as he is.

"What do you mean, Rich? I thought we were all hanging out."

"I lied. There's something that we need your help with, Eddie."

"Oh, really? Is something wrong?"

"Richie," Stan says, voice rising in panic.

Richie shoots him a look. "It's cool, Stan. Eddie will understand."

"Understand what? What's going on?"

"Stan wants to kiss you, Eddie," Richie says, not once taking his eyes off Stan. He's got that smile on his face again, the one that hides fangs.

"What?" Eddie's eyes go wide.

"Richie's just being an idiot, don't listen to him," Stan stammers, throat closing up and his palms starting to sweat. Christ, how could he bring this up in front of Eddie? That fucking *asshole*.

Eddie's eyes flash with anger. "This is a really lame fucking joke, Richie. Why don't you try another one?"

"Not a joke, baby. Is it Stan? Come on, tell Eddie about your little crush."

"Whatever. I'm out of here."

He has one foot outside when Richie calls after him. "I promised one kiss, didn't I?" Leave now and you'll completely blow it, Uris."

It makes Stan pause. He knows it shouldn't. Knows he should keep walking and go home. Find some way of getting Richie back. But pictures of Eddie spill into his head unbidden: laughing, smiling, his hand on Stan's arm. The way he looked pressed against the cowshed. And he wants.

Richie looks victorious when Stan turns around. "I fucking knew it."

Eddie tugs on Richie's sleeve. "What are you talking about, promised one kiss?"

"I've been feeling sorry for Stanley here. He wants you real bad. I said he could have one kiss with you if it made him feel better."

Eddie tries to laugh it off, shaking his head. "Stan doesn't want me, do you Stan?"

He looks at Stan for reassurance, but the smile slips from his face when he sees the expression on his face.

"You don't get it, Eds. Stan's been staring at you for months. At school, in the cafeteria, in the library, in the park. It's like he's got a season ticket and you're the only thing playing at the movies. He can't take his eyes off you."

Shame floods through Stan as he stares down at Eddie's sneakers. "Why are you being such an ass?" he croaks.

"Just saying how it is."

Eddie turns to Richie with a knotted brow. "Is this some kind of test?" Eddie strokes a hand down Richie's arm, his voice going low and soft in a way Stan's never heard from him before. "Rich, you know I- you know I don't want anyone but you."

Stan tries to ignore the way his chest caves in a little hearing that.

"I know that, Eds," Richie murmurs. "But you don't want Stan to be sad, do you?"

Eddie shakes his head. "No," he says quietly.

Richie turns to Stan. "And you want to kiss Eddie, right? You want to know how it feels."

Stan nods, looking anywhere but at Eddie.

Richie clicks his fingers. "Come here then. What, you gonna kiss him from all the way over there, dufus?"

Stan swallows. Somehow gets one foot in front of the other, the air like treacle, until he's standing in front of Eddie.

Eddie looks nervous, bunching his fingers into the hem of his t-shirt. "Richie, I don't know how to kiss Stan. I've only ever kissed you."

Richie smiles and runs his thumb across Eddie's bottom lip. "You're going to be great, baby. Just do what you did to me when we first kissed."

"You shoved your tongue into my mouth when we were 14, that doesn't count."

"That's because I wasn't going to stand around and stare at you for the rest of my life like a fucking moron," Richie says, making Stan grit his teeth. But before he has a chance to retort, Richie places a hand on the centre of Stan's back and shoves him closer to Eddie.

"Tally-ho then, dear fellow," he says in a plummy British accent. "It's time for you to explore unmapped terrain!"

Stan stands awkwardly in front of Eddie. Can't move. Can't speak. Can't do anything.

Richie huffs impatiently. "What is it? You have kissed someone before, right?"

"Yeah, asshole, I have."

"Do you need pointers? Want me to tell you how Eddie likes to be kissed?"

Stan shakes his head. He knows how Eddie likes to be kissed. He's seen it. Knows he likes it when Richie's a bit rough with him, when he uses his fingers to pull Eddie's hair back, when he bites on Eddie's bottom lip until it's ruby red.

"Don't be such a pussy then. He's right there." Richie's face turns sly. "Do you think I chickened out when I finally got my chance with him?" His eyes flick to Eddie, who's visibly thrumming. "It's okay, babe. It's just one little kiss. You know you wanna be good for me."

Eddie looks at him, brown eyes wide and trusting.

Stan shifts uneasily. "Look, maybe we shouldn't-"

His brain and mouth stop working when Eddie walks towards him, pressing gently into his space until Stan sees each of his freckles up close.

"It's okay, Stan," he says, gently. "You can kiss me."

And so Stan does. Before he knows what he's doing, he's leaning in and closing the distance between their lips. Feeling, like a punch to the gut, just how soft Eddie's lips are. But it's not like he imagined. Eddie is still and unresponsive. He doesn't sink into Stan's kiss or press against him. Not like the way he does with Richie. In Stan's dreams, Eddie always likes it. Surges up to meet Stan as they kiss by the library, or under a tree in the park.

"Come on, sweetheart, loosen up a bit," he hears Richie dimly in the background.

Eddie relaxes slightly, and their lips melt together like taffy. His lips are so much softer than a boy's should be – even Penelope's weren't this soft – and he tastes like the artificial sheen of honey lip balm. As Eddie relaxes into the kiss, his palms come up to rest on Stan's shoulders, and Stan can feel how warm he is through his shirt. Can smell the shea butter lotion he uses on his hands, the sweetness of his

feathery breath.

"That's more like it," Richie says.

The heat of the deepening makes Stan feel woozy, reminding him of the pilfered peach schnapps Richie had slipped into their drinks. Feeling a surge of confidence – *he's actually, finally kissing Eddie!* – Stan opens his mouth and traces the tip of his tongue against the seam of Eddie's lips. For a split second the other boy goes completely rigid, and Stan panics, is about to pull back and apologise, when Eddie opens up like a shy flower. Their tongues touch between their mouths and Eddie lets out a tiny little gasp. It's minuscule, but it makes every part of Stan go molten, pulls at his lower stomach like a string. Makes something hot and electric snap between them.

Eddie pulls back and their lips part with a soft snick. Stan opens his eyes to see Eddie's face is pink, lids hooded. And Stan wants more, he wants to hear that gasp again. Wants to kiss Eddie and maybe touch him this time. See how soft his hair is between his fingers, feel the pulse on his neck.

He leans in again, but that's when Richie gets his hand on the back of his shirt, pulling him away.

"Whoa, Uris, you dark horse. I said one kiss, remember?" Richie runs his eyes along Stan's arm and laughs. "You gave him goosebumps, Eds."

But Stan isn't listening because Eddie's breathing a little harder than he was before, and his lips are as pink as wrapped store-bought candies.

Stan leans in again without thinking, but jumps back, hissing, when Richie digs his fingers into his shoulder. "I said no, dude."

A second later he's shoving Stan away, smirking as Stan rights himself with a glare. "I'm proud of you, man. You really stepped up to the plate."

"Fuck you, Richie," he says, balling his hands into fists. He's never punched someone before, but he thinks he could now.

Richie just arches an eyebrow, a lazy grin spreading across his face. "Fuck me? I gave you what I wanted, didn't I?" He walks around to Eddie, keeping his eyes locked with Stan's as he slides an arm around his shoulders.

"You did really good, baby. But you just have to do one more thing." He lifts Eddie's chin with one finger. "Now you have to kiss me."

Before Eddie can answer, Richie's pulling him by the waist to kiss him. And it's nothing like the shy, tentative kiss from Stan. Richie isn't shy at all. He grabs Eddie like he was made for him, pulling his waist up until Eddie's on his tiptoes, kissing him like he has a fever. When he wants Eddie to open his mouth, he doesn't ask at all, uses his thumb to pull Eddie's mouth down until he can force his tongue inside. And Eddie lets him. More than lets him, with his arms around Richie's shoulders, making shocked little noises that sound something like pleasure and a little like pain.

As they kiss, Richie opens his eyes and winks at him, grins into Eddie's mouth. Stan, in shock, doesn't move an inch.

Richie kisses Eddie until his entire body is trembling, big hands bracketing his waist as he bites at Eddie's bottom lip, licking his way into his mouth when Eddie moans. The sound makes every hair on Stan's arms stand on end. Because it's that same moan from the day at the cowshed. Not the quiet gasp he just gave Stan, but a hoarse, throaty warble like the sound an animal makes.

Rich finally lets Eddie go, ending the kiss with a slow, deep lick at his bottom lip. He keeps Eddie tucked under his side with an arm around his waist, using his other hand to push back his dark mop of hair. Eddie, dazed, lets himself be pulled, eyes glazed and mouth red.

"That's how I first kissed Eddie," Richie says, his entire face lit up by a low, dripping smirk. "Wanna guess why he's with me?"

"You're being mean, Richie, stop it," Eddie whispers, and a shiver zips down Stan's spine at how wrecked he sounds.

"I'm just showing him how things are. Isn't that right, Stanley? Is there anything else you want to know? Wanna watch how I touch

Eddie in other places?" One of his hands comes down to squeeze Eddie's ass as he says it, gripping it tightly as Eddie sucks in a short, sharp breath.

"Want me to show you all the other things you can't have?" Richie asks.

But Stan doesn't answer. Doesn't have time. Because the next thing he's doing is running: running out of the clubhouse, running away from Richie's wolf grin and Eddie's pitiful eyes, running from the kiss that's seared him from the inside out.

"See ya around, Manly Stanley!" Richie calls after him, a bark of high-pitched laughter twisting his words. As he runs through the wood, Stan feels his eyes burn with tears, not stopping even when a straggle of thorns closes around his ankle and scratches his skin to ribbons. The pain is almost cleansing in its white heat, and through the sting Stan vows to never look at Eddie or speak to Richie fucking Tozier ever again.

But before he knows it, it's 23 years later, and the kiss is the first thing Stan remembers when he walks into the Jade of the Orient after a phone call that disrupts his charming little life. It's the first thing he sees when he sees the small, beautiful, dark-haired man standing by the table. And Stan doesn't know who he is, but he knows that he wants to kiss him. Knows that he'll die if he doesn't get his lips on him. And before he's even said hello, he's walking toward him, has his face in his hands and is kissing him.

Everything around him fades away. The restaurant, Derry, the Losers, everything but the feel of Eddie's lips against his.

The bubble bursts when he feels a hand grab the back of his shirt. He's pulled away violently and comes face to face with a mammoth-shouldered, six-foot-three Richie Tozier.

"What the fuck did I say?" he snarls. "I said one fucking kiss and that was it."

"Shit, I'm sorry, Richie." He turns to Eddie, who's gone white with shock, a hand over his mouth. He notices the glint of his wedding

ring, wonders if Eddie and Rich got married in the intervening years. "I'm sorry, Eddie," he says, despite not really remembering who Eddie is.

"It's okay," Eddie says faintly behind his hand.

"Do you want a piece of him too?" Richie shouts at a tall, handsome man standing in the corner with a redheaded woman.

"No, I'm good, dude," the man replies, raising his hands as if Richie's a dangerous animal.

And maybe Stan really does have a death wish, but he feels drunk off the kiss and he says to Eddie, "Your lips still taste like honey."

Richie rounds on him again. "Seriously, dude, are you trying to piss me the fuck off?"

And Stan's not been in a fight in years. Not since a quick scuffle at college when a jock asshole who spoke exclusively in racial slurs. But he's mentally preparing to get the shit kicked out of him, when Eddie gets between them. "Richie, don't," he says, and he's pulling Richie away.

As soon as they touch, something happens. They stand and stare at each other, a childhood fill of memories pouring back into their heads. A moment later, Eddie pulls his hand back as if he's been cut, but the damage has been done. Because Richie is staring right at him, eyes all pupil, breathing hard, and he looks like he's about to pull all of Eddie's clothes off two minutes into the Losers' reunion.

Stan suddenly gets a good look at Richie. "Hey, aren't you Richie Tozier? You're famous," and the tension breaks as everyone starts laughing.

It's better after that, as they swap memories and stories from the last 23 years. Stan sits between Eddie and Richie, and finds he doesn't even mind Richie's ribbing when he pats him on the back saying, "Congrats on not being a fucking virgin anymore." And maybe Stan does find himself looking at Eddie sometimes. The beautiful boy who grew into an even more beautiful man. But it's not like it means

anything. It's not like it can hurt.

At the boarding house later that night, he wonders what all the fuss was about. Sure, Stan had been upset. And maybe he hadn't spoken to Richie again after the prank he pulled. Maybe the Losers had been divided. But six months later, Stan's parents were driving him to college and a year after that he met the woman who would become the love of his life. So it wasn't that bad, really.

Stan doesn't think about it again until he's making his way to his room, as he thinks about calling Patty and telling her he's okay. That he's sorry he left the way he did. As he rounds the corner, he sees two figures huddled together at the end of the hallway. Eddie and Richie.

The memory of that hot summer's day whips through him, leaves him breathless. He sees the sharp tips of Richie's teeth, Eddie's flushed face, his two best friends entwined like snakes in the dark shade of the cowshed. He blinks the image out of his eyes like sun spots, just to see its mirror image: Richie pressing Eddie up against the door to his room, big hands cupping Eddie's face as they make out hungrily. And Stan thinks about every time he was forced to watch them kiss, how much he ached. How desperately he wanted. The cup of nectar that was Eddie's kiss.

Eddie and Richie finally part, foreheads touching as they both suck in a shuddering breath.

"We really shouldn't be doing this," Eddie says, even as he fists his hands in the front of Richie's shirt.

Richie licks his teeth, rubs his stubbled cheek along Eddie's throat. "Why, because you'd prefer to be doing this with Stan?"

"Richie, come on," Eddie keens softly. "It was always you, you know it was always you. I mean because I'm married now."

"Somehow I don't really give a fuck. Why don't you invite me into your room so I can show you?"

So Eddie does, fumbling behind his back until Richie gets a hand between Eddie and the door and unlocks it with a fierce shove of his

hand. They fall into Eddie's room, lips on each other again, the door slamming behind them. Stan stands there for a few more minutes, heart beating heavily. When he gets back to his room, he looks at the phone. Thinks of calling Patty but doesn't. He falls asleep that night thinking of Eddie, and how pink he gets when he's being kissed. Wonders, in the safety of the dark, if he'll see him in the morning with the indent of Richie's teeth on his neck.

Author's Note:

I have this weird thing where I low-key ship Eddie with Stan, but only if it's enabled by Richie or if Richie isn't in the picture for some reason. I 100% believe in Reddie forever, but I think Eddie and Stan would have such a sweet energy. So this came into my head and wouldn't let me go. Richie is a real dick in this and that probably should have been its own warning.

As a side note, I played with the idea of this being Bill instead of Stan, but Richie would have gone totally feral and pushed Bill out of a window if there was even a whiff of Bill wanting to kiss Eddie. Minimal plot, maximum murder for sure.

Come talk to me on Tumblr at [shortcake-kaspbrak](#).